—except temporarily in the third quarter of the century. The civil strife of the twentieth century, however, so consumed the scanty surplus of food in many regions and so disrupted economic life over wide areas that millions were brought into dire poverty. To this was added, after 1931 and especially after 1937, the miseries of foreign invasion. Many, deprived of their ordinary livelihood, took to banditry or swelled the ill-disciplined cohorts of the warlords. The armies and the hordes of bandits increased the distress, still others were driven to depredations on their neighbors, and a vicious circle was created which made the establishment of order increasingly more difficult.

Moreover, China's troubles were complicated by the ever-changing combinations, intrigues, and clashes between the many social, economic, and political groups which were part of the structure which the new China inherited, in more or less modified form, from the old. Guilds, clans, secret societies, and political cliques were involved. Secret societies, indeed, played a much larger part than all but a few well-informed foreigners realized. Many of the political and military leaders belonged to them and their affiliations often determined or modified political events. Chinese politics were exceedingly complex, with many currents and cross-currents, and were confusing in the extreme.

Only the main outline of the story need here be given. As we have repeatedly seen, the Ch'ing dynasty had been in decline since the close of the eighteenth century, and its demise had probably been postponed only by the loyalty of some able Chinese. By 1901 its sands had nearly run out. The Boxer fiasco dis-

credited it. The Emperor, Kuang Hsu, was virtually a prisoner. The father of the heir apparent was one of the most ardent supporters of the Boxers, and the heir apparent himself an uncouth roue. The new heir apparent appointed after 1900 was an infant. Tz'ii Hsi, while able and vigorous, was unfitted to give adequate leadership.

After 1900 the Ch'ing attempted to reorganize the government to meet the demands of the new day. Important changes were effected in the administrative system, from the central boards in Peking to the bureaucracy in the provinces. A beginning was made of a new code of laws. The old civil service examinations were discontinued, and a system of tests introduced for aspirants